

Paris,

Pretoria,

Peking . . .

Proliferation?

*"The absence of French, South African and Communist Chinese signatures from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty does not immediately upset the Treaty. . . . We are prone to exaggerate the indifference of such nations to a further spread of nuclear weapons. Yet to demonstrate that fears are groundless does not terminate their political significance." George Quester is associate professor of government at Cornell University.*

On a superficial first impression, there is a glaring weakness in the efforts of the United States and Soviet Union to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty limits possession of nuclear weapons to the five nations already in the "club," the U.S., USSR, U.K., France and China. Yet only three of these five nations intend to sign and ratify the treaty. These three will indeed refuse to give away nuclear weapons, and will assist peaceful nuclear projects only where IAEA safeguards ensure that no weapons are produced. But won't the Treaty be meaningless if France and China are free to offer bombs to anyone that asks for them? Supporters of NPT can respond that the gap will be filled if most potential recipients of nuclear weapons sign the Treaty, i.e., promise not to accept such gifts. Yet abstentions by nuclear weapons nations may still make a great difference.

Some "near-nuclear" nations are already capable of making bombs

without any assistance. Most however can do it much more easily with material or technical help from the outside. Indeed, if one were prepared to give complete bombs away, any potential receiving nation thereby becomes a "near-nuclear" power. France and China can give bombs away if they want; they have not legally promised not to. They can also give away technical information on how to produce bombs. Some other states are similarly significant in that they can sell or give away uranium, the material of which bombs are made. What if they also refuse to sign NPT?

For the moment, the attitude of Paris seems reasonably clear. France, its foreign minister has said, will not sign NPT, but will behave just as a signatory would. We will, of course, never receive an exact accounting of the assistance France rendered to Israel, or a denial that France left any bombs with its one-time partner. Also left unsettled are the rumors that Israeli scientists contributed to French progress on the H-bomb. Presumably, any such cooperation has now been terminated by political developments other than NPT.

We can also not be certain that nonsignatory France will interpret NPT quite as strictly as will signatory states. France will not give away bombs; but would she sell India or someone else crucial components, enabling that country to escape IAEA safeguards and then to make its own weapons? Even the signatories will argue about which sales are allowed and which are forbidden to a state rejecting safeguards. Whenever France and India negotiate any agreement on heavy water, etc., some part of the world

public will again fear an undermining of NPT.

Bombs can be disseminated by nuclear-weapon nations and/or by nations controlling sources of uranium. In descending order, the three most significant sources of uranium are the United States, Canada and South Africa. As one of the nuclear-weapon nations that wrote NPT, the position of the United States is clear. Canada's position is also reasonably clear, a combination of moral objection to the spread of weapons and general aversion to the vagaries of the uranium market. Having suffered economically when the United States curtailed its own production of warheads abruptly in the early 1960s, Canada is not likely to become enthusiastic about potential uranium markets to be found in other countries. In any event, Canada has signed and ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

#### SOUTH AFRICA

The Republic of South Africa may be more of a problem. South Africa has not indicated as yet any intention of signing NPT. As a semi-outcast in the international community, Pretoria has a difficult path to tread. There might be gains to bypassing the international system with uranium sales in special circumstances, but there will also be strong arguments for cooperating with the system, tacitly or explicitly.

Of those states which are imminently interested in nuclear weapons, there are a number which would seem to be disqualified from partnership with South Africa. India, Pakistan and the United Arab Republic all have explicitly denounced the white regime. In extremis, one



of these states might quietly accept uranium even from the devil, but it is hard to see what South Africa could be offered in return. Cash payments might more easily ease South African qualms on sales to Germany, Japan, Brazil, Australia or Argentina, if these states remain outside the NPT system. As will be seen, however, cash considerations can also make South Africa support NPT and the IAEA.

There has been speculation on cooperation between Israel and South Africa, some of it maliciously originating from Eastern European sources which like to lump together the regimes they oppose. Israeli involvement in Black Africa may superficially stand in the way of cooperation, as might the occasional anti-Semitism that emerges in South Africa, but both countries could indeed overlook this if grander projects were involved. One could obviously speculate on a deal whereby both states got nuclear weapons, combining South African uranium and Israeli expertise. Cooperation in the sharing of other military hardware might bring the two countries together also, as each is under a slightly different kind of arms embargo. Yet there will still be important arguments against South Africa so brazenly defying the world's consensus on proliferation.

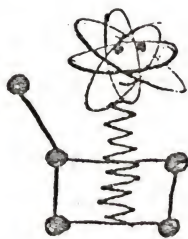
## ARGUMENTS

First, because of the revenue they earn in selling uranium to the legitimate peaceful power reactor market, South Africans will have to be concerned. This market now promises to expand rapidly in the 1970s; but the appearance of a sixth nuclear power could substantially hamper this, as the United States and other technologically advanced states become reluctant to license or sell reactors, or to process fuel. The Republic has thus several times stated that it will not allow its uranium sales to be used to increase the number of nuclear-weapons nations.

There is also something dignifying and stabilizing for South Africa in being a supplier of uranium, just as in being a source of gold. But for this, the style might be more parochial, xenophobic or radical. If NPT induces the world to tolerate a

great expansion of nuclear power production, it would be short-sighted and foolish for South Africa to rock the boat. Of course, NPT might hurt the uranium market by fracturing it into signatory and non-signatory blocs, with conflicting incompatible control systems. If it wins widespread acceptance, however, it can ease barriers to fuel transfers and sales, as the IAEA safeguards become standardized and replace bilateral or Euratom arrangements. The Republic's current reluctance to sign the Treaty thus might simply reflect an uncertainty on how the Treaty will be accepted elsewhere, that is, whether it will stabilize or upset peaceful nuclear development.

For the moment, most of South Africa's uranium sales depends on the enrichment services of some other nation. The market for uranium is essentially divided into two clusters: installed power reactors which re-



quire enriched uranium as a fuel, and reactors which can utilize natural uranium. Countries with natural fuel reactors can come to terms directly with the Republic, and could presumably produce plutonium for atomic bombs directly from South African uranium. A nation requiring enriched uranium, however, will have to find some means to pre-process the South African product. For the moment, there are few such enrichment facilities available outside the current nuclear-weapon nations, indeed outside the United States. The USSR, France and China have facilities for enriching uranium; Britain has a facility which was shut down for a time, but may now be reopened if the commercial demand for enriched uranium makes it profitable. Proposals for gas centrifuge processes are under study by an Anglo-Dutch-German consorti-

um, and in Japan. If these nations sign the Treaty, however, their facilities and any materials passed through them will also be under IAEA safeguards, whether or not South Africa signs NPT.

Pretoria may thus be dissuaded from delivering uranium to the "sixth" nuclear-weapon nation. Yet one must also consider the Republic's option of itself becoming the sixth. Under present circumstances, South Africa stands to gain less than it would lose in making nuclear weapons itself. The conventional superiority over any political opponents in Africa is so clear that it would hardly seem advisable to change the rules of the game. The Republic generally seeks to avoid publicity, and a nuclear-weapons program surely would focus the world's attention all the more on South Africa. If some other state, for example India, breaks the ice by becoming the sixth nuclear power, the Republic could then more easily contemplate conspiring with someone to become the seventh and eighth. At the moment, a move toward nuclear weapons would rouse great opposition and emotion, in Africa and out.

## COMPLICATIONS

Several kinds of circumstances might thus be required to make South Africa willing to dispense uranium without safeguards. If NPT fails to pull in most of the significant near-nuclear nations, e.g., if Germany and Japan and Italy try to go it alone in refusing to ratify, South Africa could be guided in this direction simply by economic considerations. Even without safeguards, such markets would be difficult to pass up. Alternatively, if political and military events lead the Republic to feel a need for nuclear weapons, or for some other special kind of weaponry, it might be ready to offer its uranium in exchange. Finally, there might be some other special favor which another nation might be able to grant in exchange for assistance on nuclear weapons. If the analysis above is correct, however, it would have to be an extremely big and necessary favor to make such a defiance of NPT worthwhile.

None of this necessarily requires



that the Republic sign NPT. South Africa can certainly observe the Treaty without signing it. As an important supplier rather than receiver of critical materials, it can afford to mold a policy of its own, demanding safeguards over most or all of its sales. There are some clear bargaining arguments for such a noncommittal position, whereby South Africa would cooperate with the NPT system, but not bind itself to do so forever. On a year-by-year basis, the threat of unsafeguarded uranium sales can be held in reserve to deter overly-stringent boycotts and embargoes, to force the United States and Britain to accommodate South African interests where such accommodation is crucial. In this light, it would be optimal for South Africa neither to surrender nor to exercise the option of spreading nuclear weapons.

Aside from this residual threat of selling uranium to weapons producers, the Republic might withhold an NPT signature simply to avoid unnecessary IAEA inspection of South Africa. Reactors purchased from abroad will, of course, have to come under IAEA safeguards on a project-by-project basis, but at least the uranium mines can escape inspection. At the moment, IAEA safeguards procedures do not extend to mining, but NPT fairly clearly calls for an extension of such inspection to mines as well as reactors. South African failure to sign the Treaty may thus reduce potentially troublesome access by outsiders to the Republic. It could maintain a secrecy on exact amounts of gold and uranium production; the two are somewhat conjoined. Such secrecy is certainly important for merchandizing gold; it might someday also facilitate the clandestine sale of uranium.

### CHINA

Peking, a third possible threat to NPT, normally draws the most speculation and attention. Chinese communist statements in the past have suggested that it would be desirable if all socialist nations possessed nuclear weapons. Other pronouncements have declared that no nation can deny another nation the right to such weapons. Denunciations of

the Non-Proliferation Treaty have been forthcoming ever since it became clear that the U.S. and USSR might agree on such a pact.

Given Chinese interests in various parts of the globe, it has thus been quite plausible that Peking might deliver weapons to nations requesting them. Leaving aside various national liberation movements, which are not likely recipients of nuclear weapons from anyone, two specific possibilities have drawn some comment—Pakistan and U.A.R. There are many similarities between the two. Each has a hostile neighbor known to be capable of early manufacture of atomic bombs. Each has despatched delegations of physicists to China; whatever the intention, this has encouraged speculation on nuclear weapons assistance from Peking.

At first glance, outsiders might wonder what will prevent such transfers from occurring. Pakistan will not sign NPT until India does, which probably means never. Egypt signed the Treaty under obvious Russian pressure, but will not ratify it unless Israel signs and ratifies. Peking is at least nominally committed to great sympathy for proliferation to such nations.

### MORE PROBLEMS

If India definitely acquires nuclear weapons, Pakistan may very much want to do the same. In the worst of situations, nothing else might suffice to deter the use of Indian bombs. Long before this calamity, the psychological inferiority suggested by Pakistan's non-nuclear status might seem undesirable. As long as India has not yet manufactured any nuclear explosives, a Pakistani request for such weapons may seem less likely, for Rawalpindi clearly prefers a non-nuclear confrontation with its only adversary. Unfortunately, however, New Delhi senses two adversaries, one of which, China, has already gone nuclear.

If Israel definitely acquires nuclear weapons, the U.A.R. may very much want to do the same. There have been rumors that Egypt sought a promise from the USSR that it would be provided A-bombs if Israel manufactured its own, a request which the Soviets rejected. The

wording of NPT in any event makes it illegal for the Russians to give nuclear weapons to the U.A.R., even if Israel has acquired its own. Again the U.A.R. might be expected to turn to Peking for the same declaration, since Peking will not be bound by the Treaty. Indeed, Egypt might want to acquire nuclear weapons from China even before Israel had acquired them, for its hopes for peace are hardly as high as those of Pakistan with India.

### PEKING A FACTOR

Yet there are contrary considerations for both Pakistan and the U.A.R. which make any immediate transfer of nuclear weapons from China much less likely than the pessimistic picture would have it. The U.A.R. is heavily dependent on Russian military assistance; Pakistan is seeking to acquire such assistance. The Russians are opposed to proliferation and are at odds with China. For either Pakistan or Egypt to become so visibly involved with Peking might alienate much more immediately necessary assistance in the conventional weapons field—the atomic bomb is not a panacea which quickly replaces all this. Moreover, neither Pakistan or Egypt has totally burned its bridges with the United States, and would surely be doing so if either one were to announce an agreement for nuclear weapons from Peking.

The reactions of the United States and USSR might go beyond cut-offs in aid. The United States, for example, might try to blockade all Chinese shipments to Egypt if it had been made clear that nuclear weapons were being handed over. World public opinion could well be marshaled behind strong sanctions against any nation which thus brazenly attempted to become number six in the nuclear club. Much would depend, of course, on whether Israel or India had already reached for the bomb and public opinion had been mobilized against them.

If the Chinese were willing to give bombs away, Pakistan and Egypt might be reluctant to accept them. Yet there is also good reason to assume that Peking is not at all anxious to give them away. Since the first detonation of a Chinese bomb in



1964, there have been some significant hedges on Chinese statements on nuclear proliferation. There are pronouncements that the assistance of one nation to another is entirely appropriate in regard to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, but that it is best for a nation seeking weapons to develop them itself. (Perhaps thus a nation may retain its independence and self-respect?)

Within the last two years, there have been more specific statements accusing the Japanese government of aspiring to manufacture nuclear weapons, and declaring that Japan under no circumstances should consider doing so. The Pro-Peking Communist Party in India has similarly opposed any Indian move toward nuclear weapons.

### A RELUCTANCE

Ever since detonating its first bomb, the Chinese Communist regime has declared its commitment to a "no-first-use" policy, whereby it would only use nuclear weapons if some other nation had done so first. No other nuclear-weapon nation has so clearly circumscribed the cases in which it would use its arsenal. The Chinese statements at times have suggested that nuclear weapons would not be used even if an American army were to invade China, as long as the Americans had not used them first. Releasing control over such weapons to other nations would appear to conflict with this apparent desire to keep all wars non-nuclear.

The statements to date thus do not firmly require Peking to refuse requests for nuclear weapons, but they certainly allow for such a refusal. The diplomatic reluctance of Cairo and Rawalpindi to become tied clearly to Peking will also make the Chinese reluctant to make firm offers of nuclear weapons aid. It would be humiliating, at the least, for Peking to be on record—publicly or even privately—with a firm offer as long as the recipients will not publicly commit themselves even to being interested. There is no evidence that private Pakistani and Egyptian talks with the Chinese have gotten down to cases on possible proliferation; there are indications that they have not, that the



"Pssst— MISSILE INSTALLATIONS."

Chinese have not been inviting discussion of this possibility at all.

The argument has been stated persuasively that donations of nuclear weapons might fit in well with the general Chinese approach to world political unrest, a low-cost donation with a high return of political confusion. Yet the opposite case can be persuasive as well. China has not professed to attach great significance to its own bombs; as mentioned above, they are to be used only if others use them first. Peking still attaches primary significance in its propaganda to well-founded guerrilla movements. To pass bombs around reverses all this in the eyes of the world. In the Middle East, it diverts attention from Al Fatah toward the U.A.R.'s government in Cairo. In general, it invites comparison with the strategic weapons Moscow could have offered; in techniques of guerrilla warfare, Peking can claim a special advantage, but in bombs it can not.

If one releases five or ten atomic bombs into the hands of the Arab

governments, the follow-up influence one has earned may not be extensive. A long and gradual guerrilla campaign with Chinese instructors and Chinese machine guns promises much greater leverage, as well as being more consistent with the "man over weapons" ideological theme from which Peking has not yet deviated.

Despite American charges against China, moreover, Peking has not been adventurist. The guerrilla movements it has supported by and large seem to have a modicum of mass following and a chance of winning. To give nuclear weapons to small guerrilla movements would be adventurism, perhaps diverting them from the tried and true paths to victory, perhaps making no difference at all. To give nuclear weapons to regimes already established, regimes which might topple overnight—as in Ghana—would similarly be adventurism. A war in which nuclear weapons were used by one or two regimes over which Peking had lost its control can hardly be



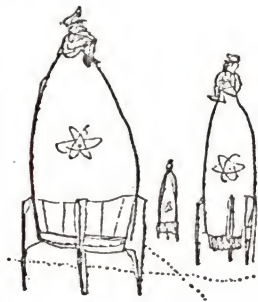
viewed with equanimity in China. If nuclear weapons are used anywhere, their use anywhere else will be more likely, and Peking has shown every sign of hoping to reduce this risk to herself.

If there is one bona fide satellite or ally of China in the world, it is Albania. But Peking has said nothing about the appropriateness of Albania getting its own nuclear weapons. Rumors were spread in 1968 that China intended to deploy its own MRBMs (medium range ballistic missiles) to Albania, presumably thereby to be able to reach targets in Russia outside the striking range from Sinkiang. Yet even these would presumably have been under Chinese control, thus not constituting "proliferation," and no confirmation for such rumors is at hand. If one feared a Yugoslav, Western or Moscow-oriented takeover of Albania, nuclear weapons might indeed be a valuable deterrent; Chinese border conflicts with the USSR similarly might justify development allowing missile strikes along different azimuths. Yet the extent of Chinese caution is shown by Peking's unwillingness to comment openly on or confirm any such deployments; unadvertised, such deployments would lack much of their deterrent effect. Peking after all described Khrushchev's missile deployment to Cuba as "adventurism" (while labelling the withdrawal as "capitulationism").

### REMAINING THREAT

The absence of French, South African and Communist Chinese signatures from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty does not immediately upset the Treaty. In our imaginations we are prone to exaggerate the indifference of such nations to a further spread of nuclear weapons. Yet to demonstrate that fears are groundless does not terminate their political significance.

As long as Peking does not definitively commit itself to resisting proliferation, it will still be possible for weapons to spread from this source. None of the barriers cited above are necessarily permanent. Changes of government can occur which might reduce the Soviet connection as a factor. This would not



even require coups which moved toward the Left domestically. If the Egyptian army, for example, were to depose Nasser and then oust the Soviet advisers, it might turn either to Washington or to Peking for support, and could well receive it.

For the moment, the proliferation scenarios remain linked to other potential nuclear-weapon programs. Israel and India are close to the development of nuclear bombs themselves, and other decisions must adjust to this. For Peking and for a potential nuclear bomb recipient, several contingency strategies must thus be considered. Nuclear weapons could be supplied quietly before any rival weapons programs reach fruition, to facilitate some grand preemptive sneak attack. Alternatively, such weapons already in place could be announced directly after India or Israel announced theirs, thus to establish an immediate counter-deterrent. There are drawbacks to any such transfer prior to the explicit provocation; supplying weapons to a "seventh" will be diplomatically much easier than having supplied them to the sixth.

A second approach would be to announce mutual agreement that Chinese weapons will be transferred as soon as, and not before, India or Israel acquires them. Unless accompanied by a clandestine prior deployment, however, this risks an attempt by someone to interfere with or preempt the transfer. Everyone today assumes that Peking, Cairo and Rawalpindi will be more amenable to a transfer if India or Israel receive nuclear weapons. Proclaiming this in advance has the advantage of putting it down clearly as a commitment, but it also inspires talk of China having acquired satel-

lites, or fears that nuclear bombs have already been transferred.

But the reasoning here does not stabilize at any primary level. Even if China had no intention of introducing nuclear weapons into the Middle East, it encourages such a development by the failure to commit itself to resisting proliferation. One linkage is as follows: Some Israelis will wish to avoid renouncing nuclear weapons and submitting to IAEA inspection; domestically they will note that such inspection can not ensure that Egypt has not quietly received such weapons from China, even if the USSR can be trusted. If the U.A.R. were to gain control over such weapons when Israel had none, the weapons could easily come into use, either because the Arabs expected to win a war thereby, or because revenge for past defeats was now possible even without victory, through bombs on Tel Aviv and Haifa. The Israeli government responds to this domestic sentiment by failing to submit to guarantees which could assure the Arabs that no bombs were being assembled in Dimona or elsewhere; the Egyptians then turn to China with a stronger argument for a U.A.R. bomb.

### IMAGES CRUCIAL

In discussions of arms control, one must be careful to consider thoughts about physical realities, as well as the realities themselves. Even if the physical problem poses no real problems, fears around them can take on life of their own. It may thus only require a plausible name on either side to stimulate precautionary arguments that snowball both sides of a conflict toward nuclear weapons. China suffices on the left, South Africa or France a little more remotely on the right.

The disincentives to these sources upsetting the Treaty are serious, but will not certainly always remain so. Worse, we can not guarantee that the images thus aroused will not stampede some part of the world into making the proliferation threat real. It is worth trying to get Treaty signatures from France, China and South Africa. If we can not, our problem is not at all hopeless, but it is a little more difficult.